

**Friends of Casco Bay
Community Engagement Committee
Meeting Minutes**

Monday, December 7, 2020, 5-6:00 p.m. via Zoom

In attendance

Board: Seb Milardo (Committee Chair), Sandy Marsters, Steve Bushey, Bud Higgins, Pat Ianni, David Kaufman, Malcolm Poole, Lori Thayer

Staff: Cathy Ramsdell, Will Everitt, Sarah Lyman, Sara Biron

Summary:

- Lots of great work happening, in what might be considered a quiet time of year. Campaign and operating donations are arriving daily, staff are in planning mode for the next fiscal year, Cathy and Will are screening applicants to the Staff Writer position, and thank you notes and letters are going out to Major Donors and Volunteers.
- We explored ways to celebrate the historic milestone of completing the campaign (when we do!)
 - Find ways to thank the 500+ donors to the campaign and let them know it is complete.
 - Keep those donors engaged with data. Consider special opportunities for them. Let them experience things first, just before others.
 - Consider for bigger external celebration:
 - document when the two new stations are going into the water, likely around April 1st, 2021. It will be important to share this news with the community, leaning on our media partners to do so.
 - Later on, Mike will pull the first rounds of sets of data from those new stations to share with our public.
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Operating Plan meetings (2 minutes)

Staff are in that dynamic time of year planning the next fiscal year, FY22, which begins April 1, 2021, and continues through March 31, 2022. We have had meetings on events, communications, community engagement, and our science work.

Update on Staff Writer applications (2 minutes)

The Staff Writer application window closed 2 weeks ago today. Will and Cathy are reviewing all 80 application packages. Each package has multiple components. There are some standout applicants which will likely lead to interesting interviews. They are hopeful that they will finish reviewing them this week and interviews will be set up to begin the first week in January.

Sharing our thinking about coastal cleanups and storm drain stenciling (5 minutes)

As part of Operating Planning, we held a meeting focused on coastal cleanups and storm drain stenciling. Staff have determined that we will start the fiscal year planning to offer these events to families and those who share a household or perhaps are in a “pandemic pod.” We know families will be looking for opportunities to do something different and this will allow us to offer something we did not in 2020. As pandemic conditions shift, we will revisit if we can safely expand this offering to diverse groups, including corporations that we worked with before COVID-19.

Climate Change and Casco Bay Fund: exploring ways to celebrate the historic milestone of completing the campaign (when we do!) (30 minutes)

Background for this conversation:

\$48,000 to go! Just over 3% of the goal remains. This has been a textbook capital campaign. Before launching the public phase of the campaign, 52 households, including all Board and Staff made donations totaling 86% of the goal. An additional 486 donors have given since the public launch. It seems likely that we will reach 520+ donors who gave during the public phase. Typically, about 10 times the number of people who gave during a quiet phase, give during the public phase. Every day donations to the campaign roll in.

In addition, Mike placed an order for all of the water quality equipment needed to launch the two additional stations and keep all three running year round. This means we will have 8 sondes on hand to support this work, allowing for redundancy for service and calibration needs. The equipment will be delivered in late January. It will need to be prepared in a variety of ways. The expected timeline is to put the equipment in the water on or before April 1st. Our first round of data from the new station is expected to be pulled around the 3rd week of April.

Will and Mike plan to work together to capture the process of receiving the equipment, unboxing it, and all the additional steps involved in getting it prepared for deployment.

Ideas on ways to celebrate the historic milestone of completing the campaign (when we do!)

Note: Staff will vet the ideas from this brainstorming session:

- This is huge! Huge for Casco Bay! Biggest fund we've ever had. What should we do to take advantage of that while celebrating and rewarding donors to the campaign.
- When will the celebration happen? This winter? Depends on ideas, though planning an in person event is hard to imagine with Covid-19 numbers increasing,
- Celebrating milestones matters; how to do that? This fund sets us up for the future. Celebrate that!
- Is there any other body of water in the US that is monitored at this frequency and consistency? We don't know of any location where this is being done by a community group, however that does not mean some don't exist.
- Accomplishment of raising money may not be as exciting as seeing what is being accomplished as a result. Inform and engage the donors in what we are doing, the complex management of the integrated work.
- 538 households donating is amazing. Over 500 people said this work is important to us. It gives us data 24 hours a day 7 days a week. We need to keep those people engaged on this work they supported and backed. How do we keep them tied to data being collected? There is a lot there. How do we at the same time, make this data collection more known publicly through the media.
- Tie a celebration to the launch of equipment or receipt of the first set of data. Create photograph and film documentation of launch. Seeing the cage at 3 locations is good for media presentation.
- Educate the public and let them know the cages are in; hold a live streamed event? Hold sessions on how to read the data. Include what to look for, tricks, stories the data tell, and consider more interview sessions. Maybe one with Roger Woodman and the person who created the new cages and Mike.
- One minute video with each staff member saying thank you interwoven with scenes of the Bay. Allow donors to hear Staff and Bay's appreciation.
- Make sure it reaches the public! This is Portland Press Herald front page news worthy! Everyone needs to be aware of this new way Casco Bay is being protected. Cathy added, we know that when something is featured in the paper, then the TV stations often want to cover it as well. It will take special effort to make the public know about this. In addition, there are subsets of the public, legislators, climate council members, local dignitaries, town managers, mayors, Portland Water District folks, who can all use these data to make decisions. Consider taking people on boat trips

to see where the sondes are. And make sure donors are well aware. People should be really proud of the Bay.

- Focus on a traditional media release. Thank donors and identify end users of the data who can speak to what this means to them on camera. This benefits many entities around the Bay. Consider aquaculture folks, environmentalists, those of the working waterfront.
- End users should also include young students.
- Tie to Maine's Climate Action Plan and Portland and South Portland's One Climate Future work in press releases. This builds on those, which have just been released. If carefully crafted, the release can pack a big punch of information. Maybe link to something more nationally?
- Be both very broad in outreach and identify what to do specifically for donors to the campaign. Will added that a number of people who contributed during the public phase are new donors, and so keeping them engaged is essential.
- When reaching the general public, opportunity to explain that this work is necessary, data are not commonly collected, and no government agency is doing it. If we don't do it no one is going to.
- Special presentation to the 52 quiet phase donors to make them feel special. They could be the first to know, via a Zoom presentation, of sondes going in the water to show how deeply appreciative we are for what they have done and how this has come to fruition. Special email and social media attention just before the general public. If not for them, we wouldn't be where we are. Make them feel special. Tell them they are going to see this in the news tomorrow. Provide a direct line to Ivy for questions (even if everyone has that all the time, allow them to feel special).
- Quiet phase donors could be first in line to go out on the boat. They don't want adoration, but do need a special thank you, which could be going out on the boat to help collect data.
- The donors will not be seeking recognition. The boat ride would make it real. Being out in the field and seeing it first hand is quite different than a multi media event.
- There will be no trouble getting media on board. And with the new Staff Writer on board, we will have capacity to do this well. It is a positive story that will get a lot of attention.
- No need to rush at this, better to know there are not any hiccups with the equipment or data collection. The longer we are forced to wait, the more likely to be able to have something in person or more normal celebration.
- Rollout may be happening 1st of May, but continue the rollout throughout summer. Show what is done and highlight what Friends of Casco Bay is doing. Do this with the legislature as well.
- This is a major story. It will be interesting to share the data in an ongoing way, the good and bad that we see in that data. Both are newsworthy, to share over time. Example of the bad: a torrential rain event that can be seen in the data.
- There are tremendous integrations with other areas of our work.
- Working Waterfront's Tom Groening is great at covering our work and will be important to reach out to, but that publication has a different reach.
- Working with the media will be a way to let the public know and also lead to and bridge future articles. Use of technology to implement data collection.

Debrief of Visual Storytelling and Casco Bay:

A Conversation with Knack Factory event (5 minutes)

What worked? What should we change in the future?

- Terrific, Alex and Lindsay very engaging! Good comradery, video high quality, Will's film was great, using various pieces helped to make it more visual. Would love to see more of this type of event/behind the scenes.
- Enjoyable more story oriented, different mode. Nice to have a mix of presentations that are more personable.

- Will did excel job hosting. He was genuine, and relaxed. The video of how the film was made topped their film! The backstory of the boat and all the under the radar details were great.
- Excellent. No expectations, and was happily surprised at the success. Very interesting to watch and quite fascinating. Will was really terrific facilitating the conversion.
- The film makers are interesting people. It is excellent how the presentations have grown in maturity since March. Do not know how it could have been better. It was quite fun!

Our events are recorded and Will lightly edits them. We hope to have that done with this event and will send out this week. Suggestion: call it How to make a documentary.

The Maine Spirits ad with the martini glasses was a great contrast to our film.

We are a visually oriented organization, and this event built on that. We think about how we present data and visual media. It was a delight to see how much our organizations are alike. We are collaborative, celebrate each staff person's strengths, and note how each of us influences others on staff.

**Reminder about Water Reporter Online Get Together event,
Wednesday, December 16, 8 a.m. (2 minutes)**

Sarah and Ivy look forward to seeing you all on Wednesday, December 16 at 8 AM for this 45 minute event. We'll have a 5 minute introduction, 5 minutes where Ivy talks about one specific example of how the Water Reporter posts are being used, 15 minutes on the app and technology (including tips), 15 minutes for thinking ahead to next year and beyond for the Water Reporter effort, and a 5 minute wrap up.

During both 15 minute sections, we will ask Water Reporters to unmute, turn their video on if they'd like, and share their experiences.

**Update on ideas generated by this committee: major donor thank you notes and
volunteer thank you letters (5 minutes)**

Two recent examples of great ideas from this committee that we have put into action: handwritten thank you notes to our major donors, and Board Members adding notes to the volunteer thank you letters we began sending annually last year. We heard from you that it is helpful to connect these dots.

Terrific effort by Board Members to complete the handwritten notes to major donors in lieu of the Donor Appreciation Event we would typically have at the beginning of December. Thank you! The extra steps of sending images of the notes keeps our files up to date as well.

To those who are adding notes to thank our volunteers, thank you! Sarah will coordinate with you to pick up this week. Next year, we will consider the new idea of asking Board Members to indicate who they know from our active volunteer list, and distribute letters based on that information. This may happen in conjunction with the Annual Fund process which is when Board Members typically let us know who they know.

Please keep the ideas coming. Share them at the meetings or send a message to Seb, Cathy, and Sandy.